

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 14935 141457Z

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7166

S E C R E T ROME 14935

NODIS

CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, US, EG, IT

SUBJECT: MIG-MAINTENANCE AND THE CONGRESS

REF: (A) STATE 218661, (B) ROME 14672

1. ON MORNING SEPTEMBER 14, DCM BRIEFED THE PRIME MINISTER'S DIPLOMATIC ADVISER LA ROCCA ON SUBJECT DESCRIBED REF A. LAROCCA THANKED US FOR ADVANCE WARNING ON THE HEARINGS, SAID HE WOULD BRIEF THE PRIME MINISTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ITALY'S POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT WILL NOT BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE.

2. REFERRING TO DCM'S SEPTEMBER 7 REQUEST (REFTEL B) FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S APPROVAL FOR THE GE/LOCKHEED TEAM'S APPROACH TO ALFA-ROMEO AND FIAT, LA ROCCA SAID HE HAD NOT YET HEARD BACK FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. HE EXPLAINED THAT ANDREOTTI HAS BEEN INTENSIVELY SCHEDULED DURING THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, PARTICULARLY NOW, AS THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND SEVERAL LAY PARTIES ARE ATTEMPTING TO FORCE THE RESIGNATION OF DEFENSE MINISTER LATTANZIO. DCM TOOK OCCASION TO BRIEF LA ROCCA ON THE GE/LOCKHEED TEAM'S ACTIVITIES SINCE ARRIVAL IN ITALY. UNDERLINING

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THAT NO MEMBER OF THE TEAM HAS YET MADE MENTION OF THE MIG MAINTENANCE PROJECT TO ANY ITALIAN COMMERCIAL CONTACT, DCM EXPLAINED THAT AS A RESULT OF NORMAL COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ON THE ONE HAND LOCKHEED AND AERITALIA/AERMACCHI, AND ON THE OTHER HAND BETWEEN GE AND FIAT/ALFA ROMEO, THE TEAM HAD BEEN ABLE TO ASSESS THE AIRFRAME AND ENGINE OVERHAUL CAPABILITIES OF THE

ITALIAN COMPANIES CONTEMPLATED. AS A RESULT, DCM WAS ABLE TO REPORT THE FOLLOWING TO LAROCCA: (A) AN APPROACH TO FIAT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY, SINCE THE ALFA-ROMEO PLANT IN NAPLES HAS THE FACILITIES AND EXCESS CAPACITY TO OVERHAUL THE MIG-21 ENGINES; (B) AERITALIA HAS THE CAPABILITY TO OVERHAUL MIG-21 AIRFRAMES IN NAPLES OR TURIN; (C) AERMACCHI IS CAPABLE OF BUILDING AIRFRAME SPARE PARTS ONLY.

3. DCM SUGGESTED THAT DROPPING FIAT AS A POTENTIAL CONTRACTOR MIGHT FACILITATE THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON THIS QUESTION. LA ROCCA READILY AGREED AND PROMISED TO BRING THE PRIME MINISTER UP-TO-DATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WITH A VIEW TO EXPEDITING OUR DESIRED APPROACH.

4. WE DRAW TO YOUR ATTENTION SEPTEMBER 11 ARTICLE IN THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, ENTITLED "BRITISH TO REPAIR MIG JETS", BY DEREK WOOD, WHICH DESCRIBES IN SOME DETAIL A "MULTI-MILLION POUND DEAL" FOR BRITISH AEROSPACE AND OLLS ROYCE TO "OVERHAUL AND REFURBISH MIG-21 PLANES, WHICH FORM THE BACKBONE OF EGYPT'S AIR DEFENCES". IF DAILY TELEGRAPH STORY IS ACCURATE, COLONEL O'MALLEY BELIEVES THAT THE LOCKHEED AND GE MEMBERS OF HIS TEAM WILL BE RELUCTANT TO PURSUE THIS PROJECT WITH POTENTIAL ITALIAN CONTRACTORS. PLEASE ADVISE SOONEST. GARDNER
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE, CAT-C, CHEROKEE 09/14/77
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME14935
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840076-0842
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770964/aaaaccii.tel
Line Count: 94
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 28c8e446-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 STATE 218661, 77 ROME 14672
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1277510
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIG-MAINTENANCE AND THE CONGRESS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, US, EG, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/28c8e446-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009